



## ***REVITALIZATION AND REDEVELOPMENT AD- HOC COMMITTEE***

The meeting of the Miami Springs Revitalization and Redevelopment Ad-Hoc Committee was held at 7:00 p.m. on February 21, 2011 in the Council Chambers at City Hall.

### **1. Call to Order/Roll Call**

The meeting was called to order at 7:04 p.m.

Present were: Chairman Laz Martinez  
Vice Chair Todd Stiff  
Arturo Rabade  
Wade Smith  
Joe Valencia

Also Present: City Planner Richard Ventura  
Deputy City Clerk Suzanne Hitaffer

### **2. Approval of Minutes: February 2, 2011 Meeting**

The minutes for February 2, 2011 were approved as written.

**Committee member Smith moved to approve. Committee member Valencia seconded the motion, which was carried unanimously on voice vote.**

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Chair Martinez reported that he was fortunate to attend the Beacon Council meeting and the City was well represented and received. There are not many locations like N. W. 36<sup>th</sup> Street that are so close to a major airport that have the potential for new development. He explained that the Beacon Council wants to know what the City has to offer; their focus is on bringing businesses to the area. There is a lot of information, endless opportunities and basically the Beacon Council cannot do anything until they have something to sell for the area, like new construction and developments. They feel that market is turning, the world economy is getting better and it was a very productive meeting.

City Planner Richard E. Ventura stated that the attitude during the meeting was enthusiastic and both parties were glad that they had contacted each other. He will be meeting with the City Manager to confirm what information should be sent to the Beacon Council. At the very least, he would send the demographic information that could be outdated since the 2010 Census information will be available next month.

Chair Martinez found it interesting that the Beacon Council mentioned the possibility of expanding the Enterprise Zone and that could have many benefits from a state perspective. Currently the Enterprise Zone ends at the airport and previous attempts to expand it were denied.

City Planner Ventura said that the City is too affluent and a lot of other communities can demonstrate definite needs on a per capita basis and they are most eligible for those programs. The City needs assistance, but it is not at the level to qualify. The Beacon Council has Staff that is ready to target areas that determined to be in the most need of development; they will assess and market what type of development would be appropriate. He explained that many international names were mentioned in terms of clients that the Beacon Council represents.

Chair Martinez explained that the Beacon Council wants to help; it is positive that they agreed to walk 36<sup>th</sup> Street and that shows a significant amount of interest. They feel that there is a tremendous potential, but it must be packaged so that they can promote it.

Committee member Smith asked about Calvin Giordano and their participation in the process.

Chair Martinez stated that Calvin, Giordano & Associates attended the meeting with the Beacon Council and they were very pleased with the reception. He added that the consultants are assigned specific work orders that are approved by Council and now they are working on the N. W. 36<sup>th</sup> Street corridor and the color palette.

Committee member Valencia stated that he has two licenses for architecture and interior design and pays a fee to the Beacon Council; he is glad that the money is going to something positive for the City.

Further discussion ensued regarding the Beacon Council and how they can work with the City.

Vice Chair Stiff stated that the best thing the City could do is to set the regulations for 36<sup>th</sup> Street that Calvin, Giordano is working on. He mentioned that at the last meeting Council discussed removing the Architectural Review Board from the review process for determining if plans meet the guidelines for the bonuses.

Committee member Smith understood that the Architectural Review Board would still be involved in the review process and they deserve an opportunity to give their opinion to Council. The process of approval was changed to streamline the process.

Chair Martinez said that streamlining the permitting process is a big issue for the developers, not because they want to cut corners, but because of the timeframe. They want one person to go to and cannot afford to get stuck in the permitting process.

City Planner Ventura felt that the Ad-Hoc Committee members should review his copy of the Beacon Council packet as it could be helpful.

Vice Chair Stiff agreed that the information packet could be introduced to the Committee.

Chair Martinez said that he would like the Committee members to see the information, but at this time there is so much material involved that it could affect the meeting.

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### **3. NW. 36<sup>th</sup> Street Corridor Recommendations from the Consultants**

Chair Martinez clarified that there are three separate districts that are tied into the 36<sup>th</sup> Street Corridor and the Consultants were hired to address one of the three districts. He felt that it is important to realize the existence of the Airport Golf District, the N. W. 36<sup>th</sup> Street District and the Abraham Tract. In his mind, the Abraham Tract is very important.

Discussion ensued regarding the boundaries of the Abraham Tract and the Comprehensive Plan regulations.

Committee member Smith said that condominium office buildings are needed in order to attract businesses and it seems like most of the parcels are used for hotels. He reiterated that foreign investors are interested in condo/offices; right now there are one or two buildings off East Drive that are empty and the old Pilot House is gives the appearance of being abandoned.

Chair Martinez stated that it would seem like a natural progression to engage the consultants in the Abraham Tract and the Airport Golf District. The City Planner mentioned to him that someone approached him in regard to a potential development in the Abraham Tract.

City Planner Ventura said that the present property owner of the former Shoney's restaurant was approached by a developer who wants to build a five-story hotel catering to the business traveler, but there is not enough site area for five stories; there would be a parking problem. The hotel representative met with the City Attorney and Staff to discuss various options and incentives.

Committee member Smith said that in today's world there must be a 50/50 compromise and developers must be encouraged to come to the City.

City Planner Ventura discussed the height limitations for the Abraham Tract.

Chair Martinez reiterated that moving forward with recommendations to Council, it seems logical to continue to engage the consultants in developing the Abraham Tract.

Committee member Smith agreed that the Abraham Tract has potential and the consultants should be involved in that area.

Chair Martinez explained that his concern going forward is about creating additional revenue streams, while still maintaining the quality of life and the Abraham Tract is not intrusive to the residential areas. It seems that if there is a property owner who wants to develop their property that it would make sense, once the 36<sup>th</sup> Street District is finalized.

City Planner Ventura agreed that there will be a momentum to move on to the Abraham Tract once the 36<sup>th</sup> Street regulations are in place. The Comprehensive Plan revisions provide for a 1.0 to 3.0 floor area ratio (FAR) for both 36<sup>th</sup> Street and the Abraham Tract, while the Airport Golf is set at 1.0 to preserve the character of the Golf Course area.

Chair Martinez felt that the Airport Golf District would be the third district to address. He would like a short, medium and long range plan with direction from Council as funds become available. He added that many improvements can be done short term that would make a positive impact and would not cost a lot of money, like Code Enforcement and building maintenance, painting, etc.

City Planner Ventura explained that the Code Compliance Staff is very busy and they would need specific direction to focus on those areas.

Chair Martinez emphasized that building maintenance should be enforced and the color palette would come into play. He cited the red building across the street on Westward Drive that is now vacant and when one building is in bad condition it makes the entire block look bad. Code Enforcement could be a short-term goal.

Chair Martinez said that the Citizen's Independent Transportation Trust (CITT) fund is another source of funding that can be utilized and the Committee could make better recommendations by having the knowledge of how those particular funds can be used and how they can fit in with the short, medium and long term plans.

City Planner Ventura responded that CITT funds could be used for any transportation related projects, such as paving, grading, drainage, curbing, directional signage, bus shelters and benches, etc.

Committee member Smith commented that marketing is very important; there are many hotel rooms on the fringe of the City and there are a variety of eateries that are not marketed within the hotels. He agreed with Chair Martinez about enforcing the maintenance of the buildings. It would help to let the building owners know that they are responsible for the upkeep of their buildings.

Chair Martinez asked the Committee members for their recommendations in regard to N. W. 36<sup>th</sup> Street.

Committee member Valencia did not recognize that the Abraham Tract is part of Miami Springs and felt that it should have different incentives in order to create more revenue.

Committee member Rabade felt that the City should take a more proactive approach to sell the location and what it has to offer in the Abraham Tract area.

City Planner Ventura stated that the focus of the meeting with the Beacon Council was to market the sites on behalf of prospective clients.

Vice Chair Stiff explained that many residents do not want outsiders to come to the City and the idea is to finalize N. W. 36<sup>th</sup> Street. Once 36<sup>th</sup> Street is finalized, it would be easy to adapt the regulations for the Abraham Tract. He said that the consultants would submit the draft ordinance for the 36<sup>th</sup> Street regulations on Wednesday, with the first reading scheduled for March 14<sup>th</sup> and it would best serve Council to address those recommendations.

Vice Chair Stiff was glad to see that the Architectural Review Board was still involved in the process, rather than the consultants. The first developer will set the standards in order to impress everyone. The Architectural Review Board members are residents and their opinions are important because they want the best for the City.

Committee member Smith said that the Architectural Review Board asked questions and made good points at the Council Workshop meeting with the Consultants.

To answer Mr. Smith's question, the City Planner clarified that the City is trying to work with the potential hotel developer on the former Shoney's site, without the involvement of Calvin, Giordano & Associates.

Vice Chair Stiff stated that the City is collecting property taxes from the empty Shoney's property, but the amount is relatively low because of the property value. Obviously, a new development with a higher value will mean more taxes to the City. The same logic applies to N. W. 36<sup>th</sup> Street. The City should be accommodating, but not to the extent that the City loses out on what they are trying to do. Miami Springs is a residential community and most residents do not want the hustle and bustle, so the scale must be balanced.

Vice Chair Stiff reiterated that it would best serve Council by making recommendations on the current proposal for 36<sup>th</sup> Street. Once the regulations are in place, the current property owners will be more likely to develop their properties.

Committee member Valencia commented that he has not seen a coherent vision for the N. W. 36<sup>th</sup> Street corridor and he is glad that the Architectural Review Board is involved because, as residents, they will better represent the town than a paid consultant.

Vice Chair Stiff said that the greatest function of the Architectural Review Board will be adding to the confidence level of the City Council members who make the final decisions.

Further discussion ensued regarding the functions of the Architectural Review Board compared to similar boards in other cities.

The City Planner continued to explain the situation with the potential developer of the Shoney's site. He said that they might be applying for variances at the same time the new district boundary regulations are being addressed.

Chair Martinez asked for additional recommendations for 36<sup>th</sup> Street. He noted that many recommendations were made during the joint meeting with the consultants and the comments were already on record. His comments were related to providing incentives for renovation of existing properties. He wants it on the record that there has been no feedback from the consultants regarding renovation incentives, such as parking impact fees; their recommendations were geared to new construction.

Committee member Smith agreed with Mr. Martinez that renovating the old buildings is just as important as new development.

Vice Chair Stiff said that he is satisfied with the land use regulations proposed by the Consultant because they are the regulations that set the standards for existing and new buildings. The idea is to allow property owners to build more usable square footage on their properties and they will be provided architectural incentives to build additional square footage. He would not want to give anything away and feels strongly about property owner rights.

To answer Chair Martinez's question, Mr. Stiff said that he was uncomfortable with Calvin, Giordano including their services in the City's Code; it was not necessary since their services were already an option.

Chair Martinez commented that uniformity between the airport side and the City side is an issue. He mentioned that there were concerns about the lighting installation on 36<sup>th</sup> Street. The median does not fall within the City's jurisdiction and the presentation included improvements in that area. He is not sure if Calvin, Giordano looked into the lighting improvements as suggested.

Committee member Smith expressed his concern about the lighting project on N. W. 36<sup>th</sup> Street since the foundations are being placed on the north side and some places are not ADA accessible where the sidewalk becomes too narrow. He would like to know what the Florida Department of Transportation is planning to do and what the City will be facing in its plans for development.

City Planner Ventura commented that the City Attorney presented a revised flow chart for the review process and he will be able to provide that chart and more information at the next meeting.

Committee member Rabade stated that the biggest issues had been resolved, including the situation with the Architectural Review Board and Calvin, Giordano & Associates. He does not have any other suggestions or enhancements in addition to what they presented and feels that Council made the right decision to include the Architectural Review Board.

Chair Martinez reiterated that his issue remains with the redevelopment of existing buildings. He added that the Beacon Council will not bring in developers; they will bring in companies that lease the buildings. It is likely that property owners will sell their building to a developer who will build a project and that is what the Beacon Council will market.

Extensive discussion ensued regarding the role of the Beacon Council in the future development of the City.

City Planner Ventura used Airbus as an example of a company that built their facility on a vacant parcel and did not move into existing office space. Their situation is very unique because they built a high-tech aviation facility on a vacant parcel and this would be worth mentioning to the Beacon Council.

Chair Martinez asked to recap the recommendations made by the Committee and if everyone was in agreement to entertain a recommendation for the Abraham Tract.

Committee member Smith agreed that the Abraham Tract would be the next area to address.

Committee member Valencia said that the Abraham Tract could be a special district with incentives for development.

City Planner Ventura advised the Committee members that the February 28<sup>th</sup> Council agenda would include an item on the Comprehensive Plan. He explained that the old Airport Highway Marine Business District was broken down into three districts with new FAR requirements. The revised Comprehensive Plan will include all the changes, once it is approved.

#### **4. Introduction of Ad-Hoc Committee Members to the Community**

Vice Chair Stiff said that he came to the first meeting wondering what the Committee was going to do. He now realizes what the Architectural Review Board means to the City Council with regard to future development and the Committee will offer the same, which is confidence. The value of the Committee is that there will be five additional opinions to help Council make the best decision.

Vice Chair Stiff explained that he is a lifetime resident of the City of Miami Springs. He is half-owner of a plumbing company that was involved in the construction of the Community Center and the renovation of the Curtiss Mansion and was selected through the competitive bidding process. He wants to be involved in the community and assist Council by making pointed questions so that everything is discussed.

Committee member Smith moved to Miami Springs in 1977, and raised two children. He became involved on this Committee since he was asked to serve and he also wondered how the committee could help with the process. He is glad to be a member and feels that the Committee members are charged with asking questions that are sometimes overlooked and to provide feedback to Council so that they have a comfort zone in their decision making process.

Committee member Smith explained that he wants Miami Springs to grow with proper development and N. W. 36 Street is an area where this can be done without impacting the residents or destroying the environment. He urged anyone to contact him with information they would like to share outside of the meeting.

Committee member Rabade stated that he has been a resident since the early 90's and had known about the City for many years. He said that Miami Springs is a fantastic place and his love for the City is one of the reasons he decided to participate on the Committee. Many people are interested in what happens in the City and some might not have the time to participate, and he wanted to help as a resident.

Committee member Valencia was born in Cuba and came to the United States in 1970 with his parents. He grew up in an area close to West Miami, served in the Army and finished his architectural degree at the University of Miami. He lived in Coral Gables before raising children and decided to move to a larger house in Miami Springs. He is also accessible to the public if anyone wants to call him and he is glad to serve the community.

Chair Martínez said that after he married he wanted to raise his kids in an area where there is quality of life and a feeling of protection and he decided that Miami Springs was the perfect place. He believes in giving back to the community. He explained that his experience in Miami Beach included involvement on many committees and the last position he held was the Chairman of the Community Development Board. Mr. Martinez moved his real estate company to Miami Springs and purchased the building on Westward Drive where the former bicycle shop was.

Chair Martinez continued to explain his feelings for the betterment of the community. He said that Miami Springs is a great City and he definitely wants to keep the scale low as the human scale is what makes the City attractive. He asked for comments from the audience.

Joe Derry of 451 Crescent Drive, # 12 commented that he fully concurs with the Committee's recommendation for the Abraham Tract and there was no mention of the Miami Intermodal Center development that is an obvious asset that should be incorporated into the general plan.

Mr. Derry said that the meeting was the best kept secret and he learned about it by reading Todd Stiff's letter in the River Cities Gazette. He said that the meeting was not on the monthly calendar of events and people should have a chance to know about the meeting.

Chair Martinez assured Mr. Derry that the Committee asked the Administration to do everything possible to publicize the Ad-Hoc Committee meetings so that people would be encouraged to attend.

Mr. Derry said that resident conspiracy theorists feel that horrible things are being done in the City and it will not help the cause if the meetings are not fully open, transparent and advertised. Some people do not read the Gazette and the more transparent the process is, the less likely there is to have the conspiracy theorists alerted and ready to go.



Jaime Petralanda of 32 Whitethorn Drive told the Committee members that he liked what he heard during the meeting as it seems that they are trying to protect the green space, keep low density and this is important to many residents. He also did not know about the meeting and would agree that there should be more transparency.

Mr. Petralanda said that he speaks with many folks and the majority of people move to Miami Springs because of the “Mayberry” charm, the greenery and low density. He feels that N. W. 36<sup>th</sup> Street is the ideal place to develop in order to lower the taxes for the residents.

Vice Chair Stiff asked the Committee members to agree on a date, time and the agenda for the next meeting.

Chair Martinez explained that the meeting date is the third Monday of every month, which would be March 21<sup>st</sup>. He would like the agenda to include an item for the City Planner to come back with feedback from the Council meeting and additional information that was requested.

City Planner Ventura asked the Committee members to call him if they needed any information or documents and he would be happy to provide them.

Chair Martinez feels that there should be direction from Council for a short, medium and long term plan. He is not sure the Committee is in a position to design that plan. He suggested that there could be an agenda item to discuss some of the ideas that were presented, including the short term plan relating to Code Enforcement. He reiterated that he would like information in regard to Code Enforcement and the CITT funding.

Vice Chair Stiff stated that the Committee members should be receiving a copy of the draft ordinance for the N. W. 36<sup>th</sup> Street boundary regulations. The City Council will have the first reading on March 14<sup>th</sup> and the members could attend that meeting or view the ordinance on line in order to be ready to discuss it on March 21<sup>st</sup>.

Committee member Valencia suggested that the Ad-Hoc Committee meetings could be posted on the community bulletin board on the Circle. He said that there must be another way to make people more aware because the intent is to represent the community and hear what they have to say.

Mr. Derry returned to the podium and suggested using all available means of communication, including the website and the calendar. He added that announcements could be made during the Council meetings.

Vice Chair Stiff clarified that it was a 3-2 vote to establish the Committee and he feels that they are not 100% sold on the purpose of the Committee. He explained that the meeting is open, it is advertised in the weakest possible way and this is only the third meeting.

Vice Chair Stiff commented that Mr. Petralanda essentially sued the City to get a referendum on the ballot in regard to concerns about Westward Drive. He knows that this is a topic of discussion that is looming and it is coming in the future. He does not approve of doing anything without due process and he would have stepped up to speak to Council if they were pushing too fast on something he felt was ill advised for Westward Drive.

Chair Martinez said that the concern is about posting the meetings, not a particular area in the City. He said that the minutes will be forwarded to Council; they will be informed that residents feel the information is not getting to them and they should take action to get the word out to the public.

Vice Chair Stiff urged the three people in the audience to come to the next meeting with ten of their friends.

Chair Martinez informed everyone that letters could be written to Council. He would like people to be involved and it will be addressed through the comments from Mr. Derry.

Mr. Derry reiterated that rumors are circulating about Westward Drive and the more people who are informed will be less likely to spread misinformation. He added that there will be more information circulating between now and election day on April 5<sup>th</sup>.

## 5. Adjourn

**The motion to adjourn was offered by Committee member Smith, seconded by Committee member Valencia and it was carried unanimously on voice vote.**

The meeting was duly adjourned at 9:19 p.m.

  
Suzanne Hitaffer  
Clerk of the Board

Approved as amended on 03-21-2011.

Correction: Page 3, paragraph 6

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***“The comments, discussions, recommendations and proposed actions of City Citizen Advisory Boards do not constitute the policy, position, or prospective action of the City, which may only be established and authorized by an appropriate vote or other action of the City Council”.***

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